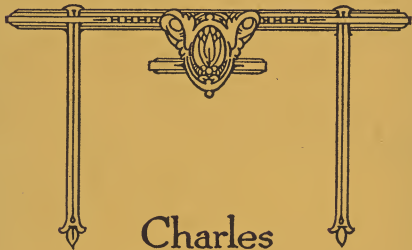


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Life Investment in America



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LIFE INVESTMENT IN AMERICA

THE CHALLENGE OF HOME MISSIONS

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THE CHALLENGE OF THE CHURCH IN AMERICA

I. *The Importance of Home Missions*

The assumption is that the reader desires to give his life where it will count most in the advancement of the Kingdom of God. Material profits are out of account. Finer satisfactions are sought in rendering service to fellow-men in the name of the Son of Man.

The question is, just where shall the great investment be placed? Specifically, what is the challenge which the home mission field offers to the young man of parts who wishes to have life count for most in the best things?

1. *The strategy of the Kingdom.* Military strategy requires that whatever else is done, necessary things shall be made sure. There must be an adequate *base of supplies*; communication must be kept open with this base and fighting *morale* must be maintained. In the advancement of the Kingdom of God, also, there are certain things which are absolutely necessary. Wise administration of kingdom activity demands that an adequate base of supplies be maintained on the one hand, and that the spiritual unction necessary to make those supplies available shall be nurtured.

2. *America, the base for world evangelization.* Archimedes, the ancient mathematician, said, "Give me a fulcrum on which to stand and I will move the world." Christ says, "Give me a fulcrum on which to stand and I will lift the world to heaven." Translated into terms of our subject, this means that if America can be made sufficiently Christian, no question will remain about the possibility of evangelizing the non-Christian world. America could furnish enough men and money to send the Gospel to every creature in this generation if she were sufficiently Christian to want to. She would soon become sufficiently Christian if there were enough of the right kind of Christian workers in America. Other things are needed for the Christianizing of the world, but Christian strategy requires that whatever else is done, and for the sake of all else that needs to be done, America shall be made thoroughly Christian.

3. *America, a demonstration of Christianity.* It is not simply that America could furnish enough missionaries and money to evangelize the world, but that with men and money should go also a clear testimony of demonstrated Christianity in the redemption of the life of a great nation. A few years ago deputations from Japan visited the civilized nations and went back to lead that empire into the adoption of Europe's war machinery because it was effective, and of

America's public school system because it was successful. They did not lead Japan to adopt American Christianity, because for some reason they did not find sufficient evidence of the success of that Christianity.

Give the present force of world missionaries the testimony of a thoroughly Christianized America and there will be no difficulty in evangelizing the world.

4. *Reconstruction demands.* Today the world looks to America for *leadership*. What will make democracy safe in Mexico, in Latin America, in Africa, in China, in Turkey, in Russia, in demoralized Europe? Only the forces which inhere in a Christianized America, the world's outstanding democracy.

Now the great *fountain head of America's moral ideals* is its home missionary work. Of course, all the moral forces in America have their part to play, but home missions operate at vital and critical points. They deal with the strata of society where danger lurks; they nourish the altruistic, self-sacrificing, truly patriotic sentiments and sanctions. With the reconstruction period have come grave social problems which must be solved. The race question, to take a single example of many urgent tasks, has been and is being forced to the fore in these reconstruction days. If the salt have lost its saltiness, wherewith shall America be seasoned?

5. *Over-churching.* But is not home missionary work overdone already? Are there not more mission churches and more mission schools than there should be? Yes, and no! Some earnest Christians have been foolish, and on occasion and in some quarters have established work that was unnecessary and harmful. There is much less of this, however, than is commonly supposed. Powerful movements, also, are on foot which are eliminating the major portion of overlapping. Moreover, the most essential factor for successfully eliminating unchristian competition in religious work in America is effective leadership in missionary forces. Only great-hearted, large-minded men and women in Christian activities in America can save us from the pettiness of shortsighted enthusiasm which leads to competitive missionary enterprises. One of the strongest challenges to the strongest young men for entering home fields is that which calls for a *leadership which shall correlate, if not unite, the Christian forces* of America in their mission work.

II. *Fields of Home Mission Work*

Where are home missionary recruits called for in America?

1. *The frontier.* America is still a sparsely settled country. The entire population of India could live west of the Rocky Mountain Divide

without reaching a density of population equal to that of New England today. By the census of 1910 the population of that region was 6,500,000. At the rate of recent growth there will be as many people on that Pacific slope in a century as there are now in the whole United States. Other statistics need not be given to support the statement that *new communities* needing new institutions of religion and education are springing up and will continue to spring up in increasing numbers in America. These call for normal home missionary work. Then there are the *reclamation projects* of the Government, actual and prospective. At present millions of acres of desert land are being made to "blossom like the rose" by great irrigation projects. The reconstruction period has raised the question of extending this work to the draining of swamp lands and the reclaiming of cut-over timber lands, with definite plans for establishing well-organized new communities wherever such reclamation is effected. These new communities will call for new churches, new schools, new Christian institutions, all of which means home missionaries. In the West, also, the *Mormon menace* challenges our young men to spread the light with such energy and effectiveness that the errors of darkness cannot persist.

2. *The country.* The rapid changes in American life have left thousands of *rural communities*

missionary fields. Eighty-three per cent of the rural evangelical churches of America have less than one hundred members. Two thirds of them have been losing ground in recent years. New rural life programs call for a paralleling religious rural life program which shall save the country—the backbone of America's strength in the past, as it should be in the future. There is a ringing challenge to the young men who know the country and love it, especially to agricultural students, to find ways of thoroughly Christianizing our rural regions.

The village is in reality a part of the country. It is the center of the rural community. From the country it draws its life. A new type of church is developing in the village. The community church, preferably with a genuine denominational connection, is coming to be the dominant factor in the village and rural life in many parts of the United States. The home boards are more and more disposed to underwrite churches which endeavor to serve the entire community, with the village as the center. For this work there are needed both men and women who will consecrate themselves to making the church at the center the dominant influence in the country life of America.

More strictly missionary are the demands which come for thoroughly devoted Christian workers in the so-called *marginal regions* far

removed from the centers of American life and culture, where the present generation famishes for the bread of knowledge and the streams of religious refreshing. Typical of this life are the mountain people of the South, who are, however, by no means alone in furnishing this field for home mission work. Many such communities are found even in New England.

3. *The city.* Still more commanding is the challenge which the great American city brings to the ears of earnest Christian young people. Our populations are centering in the city; our strength is in the city; our riches are in the city; sin and danger are in the city. Moreover, the difficulties of doing religious work center in the city. But if America is to be a Christian nation the cities must be Christianized. Here all forms of religious work challenge him who would give himself to service for Christ: missionary work in the *downtown churches* that must die without it; missionary work in the new *residence communities*, where opulence rather than need makes it difficult to reach the heart with the Gospel; the *city suburbs*, real frontiers, where families struggle to get homes, forgetting the Sabbath and the Church; *industrial communities* where congestion cooperates with social unrest to challenge the metal of the home missionary; and, finally, the reeking *slums* where men, women, and children call for rescue from destruction—

physical, mental, spiritual. Jesus set his face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem. Paul followed his example. Still the city calls for men who will not shrink from its crosses.

4. *The immigrant.* Associated with the needs of the frontier, the rural community and the city, are the special needs of those who are foreign to America and her life. By the last census 13,500,000 people born on foreign shores, with nearly 20,000,000 of their children, live in America. To leaven this great mass of new citizenry with the Christ life is certainly a commanding challenge. As integral parts of this great task there are especially difficult pieces of Christian work to be done. There are, for example, the *Asiatics* to whom our ways are as peculiar as theirs are to us, and the peoples from the *south and east of Europe* to whom our ideals are quite foreign.

"To *the Jew* first," was the original marching order of Christ's disciples. His modern land of promise has been found by the Jew in America. Would that he might find his anointed one here also! He has been here for centuries. He has come in larger numbers in recent years. Some of the mission boards maintain missions to Jews. It is difficult to find well-qualified missionaries. Is not the call sounding to some who read these lines?

Not the least challenging is the task of Ameri-

canizing the ever increasing stream of *Latin Americans* who pour across our Southern border, to our profit or as our menace, determined by whether or not we reach them with the Gospel.

Peoples speaking some two score different languages present a wide range of need for recruits from among themselves, and more particularly from young Americans of rich human sympathy and deep Christian love.

5. The *Negro*. America is especially responsible for the some eleven million colored people who live within her borders. For the work of enlightening the large percentage of this population which still lives in darkness there are needed large numbers of self-sacrificing teachers and social workers *from the white race*, as well as still larger numbers of ministers, teachers, and Christian leaders *of the colored race*. The call is for richly endowed, liberally educated young men and women of both races.

6. The *Indian*. One half of the remnant of the original Americans is still unevangelized. The people for whose souls our Pilgrim Fathers were solicitous still challenge the young American to win them to the standard of the Cross.

7. The *Alaskan*. The great territory to the Northwest, equal in extent to one fifth of the area of the United States proper, is the home of a widely scattered population of *Eskimos*, *In-*

dians, and *whites*. The native population particularly is greatly in need of teachers, ministers, medical and social workers. It is a lonely life which the Christian missionary is called upon to live who goes to labor among the Eskimos of the North, or even among the Indians of the south coast of Alaska, but it is the challenge of Christ to minister to the least of these, His brethren. Not without loneliness, also, is the life of him who goes to serve the white settlers in those remote regions. The call of Alaska is being heard by thousands and thousands of the young people of the States. The challenge of their need should also be heard by devoted young Christians who will go not for the gold that glitters yellow, but for the souls for whom Christ died.

8. *Exceptional groups*. Most destitute of all Americans, religiously and socially, are those groups that are isolated from the common life of the nation—in the *lumber camps*, in *railroad construction work*, *fishermen* upon the seas and great lakes, and many other groups that are largely denied the privileges of organized life. These summon the heroic Christian to share with them their burden and to bear to them the joy of the light of heaven.

9. *Islands*. With some denominations such service is classified as foreign missionary work, but with others the home boards are responsible for religious ministry in *Cuba*, *Porto Rico*,

Hawaii, and the *Philippine Islands*. Young men who are interested in these fields will need to ascertain whether their home or foreign boards are the proper agencies to consult.

10. *Latin America*. Likewise, there is a division of practice among the boards as to service in *Mexico*, *Central America*, and *South America*. Greater need is scarcely to be found anywhere than among the 70,000,000 of Latin Americans in these republics to the South.

III. *Types of Home Mission Work*

There is a very wide variety of need in home missionary fields.

1. *Ministers*. With many denominations the bulk of home missionary service is rendered by ordained ministers. These serve first of all as *pastors* of missionary churches. These are the growing points in the life of the Church in America. Without them Christianity in the United States would speedily lose ground. Besides pastors, however, ordained ministers are used as *evangelists*, *general missionaries*, *colporteurs*, and to supply the need of *superintendency* on the local and general fields. The call is for strong men who could have large churches with commensurate salaries if they were willing, but who prefer to do self-sacrificing service at the point of greatest need.

2. *Parish missionaries.* There is an increasing demand for *pastors' assistants*. This applies very largely to self-supporting churches, but not entirely so, since many of our missionary churches need efficient service among the people in their homes. This work is most often carried on by young women, but there is also a field for young men as church visitors, Sunday-school missionaries and specialists in social service. Schools under the direction of the various denominations prepare both young women and young men for this line of service. Engagements for such service are usually made by local arrangement rather than through the offices of the mission boards. No young person adapted to such service and equipped by special preparation need fear that opportunities for service will be wanting.

3. *Directors of religious education.* In recent years a specialized service is called for when young men are sought as religious education directors, their services being desired to shape up and direct work of religious education in all departments of church life, but particularly in connection with the Sunday school. In some instances directors of religious education give all their time to one church; in others their work embraces a group of churches in *town, county, or state*. It is a developing field in which those who enter it now will have much to say regarding its distinctive features.

4. *Social workers.* More and more the churches and missionary organizations are in need of social workers, such as *directors of recreation, physicians, nurses, and miscellaneous workers.* To a limited extent the boards make arrangements for such service, but it is largely a matter of personal discovery of fields in which to work.

5. *Teachers.* Next to ordained ministers the missionary service in America calls for teachers. The service is similar to teaching in regular schools, academies, and colleges, but is distinguished by the fact that the work is in missionary institutions and that salaries are relatively small. There is call for teachers in the young and struggling *colleges and academies* of the West and South; in specialized schools for *immigrants*, calculated to train them for various professions, and especially missionary service; in *Negro schools*, particularly in the South, these of all grades from the primary to the university; in the *Indian schools* of the reservations of the West; in *Latin-American schools*, largely in the Southwest, but also for Cubans in the Southeast; in the remote regions, *Alaska, the mountains, and the islands.* In these missionary schools the teacher's life counts for as much or more than his work. He is disciplining character as well as training the mind. Out from these schools go leaders for the groups from which the pupils come. The

young Christian who wishes to put himself into the lives of his fellows where it will lay hold most powerfully upon their souls as well as their minds, should not turn away from the call of the mission school.

IV. *Qualifications*

Not everyone is qualified to become a home missionary.

1. *Physical strength.* There is a tendency on the part of many to think if they are not strong enough for the competitive professions of life, or to pass the examinations of foreign mission boards, they can give themselves to home mission work. It is true that those who are not strong enough for the hardest work of life can do effective service in some fields; but it is equally true that the great challenge of home missions is for workers of unusual health and strength, who are capable of enduring and resisting where their weaker brethren would falter, fail, and impede the work. The task of Christianizing America, the hope of the world, has a right to call for our strongest and best.

2. *Liberal education.* The curse of home missions has been lack of equipment of her servants. So much is involved in sending missionaries to the foreign field that the utmost care is exercised in their selection. The temptation

in the home field is to risk the effectiveness of those who give promise, but who have not had full educational advantages, so that today in all probability more than half of all home missionary workers lack the liberal education which they should have for their task. If, therefore, it seems as though there were enough men available for Christian service in America, let the question be faced as to whether these are properly equipped for the service which they should render. Moreover, it must be those whose education has helped rather than quenched their *religious devotion*. Of the two it is probable that the one who is comparatively poorly equipped, from the educational standpoint, but who has fine religious passion, is more successful on the field than he who has the best of educational qualifications but has lost his Christian zeal.

3. *Natural gifts.* Misfits are unfortunate in all lines of life, but misfits in home missionary work are responsible for thousands of wrecks in spiritual enterprises. The home missionary must have a love for men; he must be tactful; he must be patient; he must have a saving sense of humor, calculated to make him human; if he is to be a teacher, he must be apt to teach; if he is to be a preacher, he must have the gift of public utterance combined with active mental faculties and winsome personal graces. It is not necessary to be perfect, but he who considers home mis-

sionary service should frankly appraise his natural qualifications.

4. *Religious devotion.* What is lacking in any one of the above items has sometimes been made up in effective home missionaries by the depth of their piety and the fineness of their religious devotion. On the other hand, the absence of this quality has frequently unfitted those best equipped in other particulars.

V. *Support*

If the prospective home missionary has a competence which enables him to ignore the question of income, then the matter of support is of little consequence except as it enters into the effect upon the people served if they fail to do their share.

1. *Relatively small.* The compensation for home missionary service is most meager.

2. *Rising standards.* Standards are rising, however, and with some assurance one may enter home missionary service today with the confidence that he will have a *living* for himself and for his family. In this connection, there is an interaction between equipment and support. With improvement in the grade of home missionaries there will be a natural improvement in the amount of support which they command both

from local fields and in aid through the boards. *Pensions* for old age and for disability are being provided by some denominations.

3. *Sacrificial life.* Home missionaries are challenged to enter upon this strategic spiritual service of *deliberate choice*, knowing that they are foregoing the good things of this world as far as they depend upon the size of income. The candidate should enter home missionary service with the determination *never to whine* no matter how hard his lot. He may enter upon it, however, with confidence that his is to be a *rich life*—rich in its breadth of personal experience; rich in its friendships; rich in its usefulness; rich in its spiritual relations, for he is to be a veritable prophet of the Lord God Almighty.

VI. *Appointments*

It is impossible to advertise for candidates for the home missionary field with as much definiteness as in some departments of Christian service, particularly the foreign missionary field; nor is it so necessary, since the hazards are not so great where one can turn his efforts to a similar service should he fail to discover exactly that for which he has fitted himself.

1. *Inquire of your Board.* Let any young man contemplating home missionary service inquire of the home board of his denomination

for information regarding the need of recruits, and if the address of this board is not known, the local pastor can doubtless supply it.

2. *Venturing.* The young person who sets out to equip himself for the practice of medicine, for example, runs the risk of discovering just the right field for his activities; so also the young Christian who chooses to prepare himself for home missionary service is called upon to venture, first choosing the line of work for which he is best fitted, then in preparing himself as effectively as possible, and exercising faith that the proper field will be found.

3. *Experimenting.* It is possible for one who is not sure of himself to experiment in home mission service. Too much of this is, however, to be deplored. The entering of home missionary service as an experiment, or as a stop-gap, or as a stepping stone to something better, forsaking the work perhaps at the most critical juncture, has proven disastrous in thousands and thousands of home missionary enterprises. Our young Christians are asked to put their hands to the plow and not to turn back.

4. *Initiative.* We live in a land of freedom of life. Our missionary agencies promote activities along established lines. *Creative minds* are needed to find ways to do home missionary service more effectively. Home missions furnish

fields for initiative on the part of creative Christian minds unsurpassed by any other opportunities anywhere.

Conclusion. The Home Mission Boards of America, the Church of Christ in the United States and the Master himself challenge the young Christians of this favored land to devote themselves to the strategic work of home missions, confident that in so doing they invest their lives where they will purchase returns than which there can be no larger.

